

PERSUASIVE SPEECH

Oral Presentation:	4-5 minutes
Oral Delivery:	Extemporaneous or Read
Written Length:	500-1000 words (in essay form, not in note form)—email me a copy before our next-to-last class

An **extemporaneous speech (or read speech)** is written and **practiced** ahead of time. You will lose points if the speech runs shorter than 4 minutes or longer than 5 minutes, so practice.

Task: Give a speech that is persuasive. This could be an epideictic speech (praising or condemning some person—living or dead, real or fictitious), a deliberative speech (advocating or attacking some new policy or idea), or a forensic speech (dealing with the past, arguing that some person or country should or should not have done x). It can be satiric, humorous, or serious.

Speech Topics: Feel free to use your imagination with the topic selection—the only requirement is that you are trying **to persuade us of something**. One restriction:

- you cannot give a speech on a topic that anyone might find offensive or insulting
- if you plan to give either a humorous or satiric speech, please email me your topic well ahead of time in case the topic is inappropriate. If in doubt about any topic, please email it to me well ahead of time before you invest a lot of time in preparing it.

Here are *suggested* topics, but feel free to create your own:

- We have encountered many issues (rhetorical and otherwise) in our readings. Feel free to give a persuasive speech about one of those (e.g., connection or lack of connection between ethics and rhetoric, role of a rhetorical critic vis-a-vie society, nature of rhetorical situation—Bitzer & Vatz)
- Argue for the greater importance of some belief or value over some other belief or value (e.g., that compassion is more important than justice, or justice more important than compassion, or honesty more important than success, or success more important than honesty, or safety more important than or privacy, privacy more important than safety, etc., etc.)
- Argue for some change in some policy (at MIT, in Cambridge, in the US, in the world)
- Argue that a college education should (should not) be free for all students
- Argue that college students should be free to choose any courses they wish rather than having to fulfill General Institute Requirements
- Free speech should (should not) be entirely free.
- Argue that “the truth is out there” and we can (or cannot) know it
- Our government’s most important role is to protect us rather than to protect our individual rights.
- Science’s use of rhetoric undercuts its claim of objectivity.
- In an open and free exchange of ideas, the truth will always win.
- Perception is reality.
- It is honorable to disregard the truth in order to persuade.
- Laws can/cannot promote ethical behavior.
- There is a lack of (or too much emphasis upon) professional ethics in the US
- A rhetor must be morally good.
- Affirmative Action as a method for combating racism and sexism is still necessary.
- Argue your own topic

Use all the resources of rhetoric to make your speech convincing—your own ethos, appeals to pathos, logos, metaphor, etc..

To Prepare for your speech:

- Write and type out your speech

- Make an outline of the main points you wish to make (never more than 2 or 3 main points and then examples or evidence or reasons to support them)
- Practice the speech at least 4 times all the way through: 2-3 times by yourself (practicing gestures as well as the phrasings), and at least once in front of someone (e.g., a Writing Center Consultant, a friend). The more you practice, the less nervous you will feel and the better your performance will be.
- **Time your speech when you practice**—never run over the allotted time!

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